

**Claims**

1        1.     A formulation comprising at least one anesthetic compound selected  
2        from the group consisting of procaine, lidocaine, tetracaine and salts thereof;  
3        and a skin penetration enhancer, and a gelling agent in an anhydrous mixture.

1        2.     The formulation of claim 1 wherein said skin penetration enhancer is at  
2        least one compound selected from the group consisting of: benzyl alcohol,  
3        propylene glycol, and ethoxydiglycol.

1        3.     The formulation of claim 1 wherein at least two skin penetration  
2        enhancers are present.

1        4.     The formulation of claim 1 wherein said at least one anesthetic  
2        compound is present in said formulation from 1 to 25 total weight percent.

1        5.     The formulation of claim 3 further comprising a third skin penetration  
2        enhancer.

1        6.     The formulation of claim 1 wherein said at least two anesthetic  
2        compounds are procaine, lidocaine and tetracaine, or salts thereof.

1        7.     The formulation of claim 1 wherein lidocaine is present from 0.5-6 total  
2        weight percent.

1        8.     The formulation of claim 1 wherein said skin penetration enhancer is  
2        present from 0 to 95 total weight percent.

1        9.     The formulation of claim 1 wherein said skin penetration enhancer is  
2        present from 25 to 45 total weight percent.

1        10.    The formulation of claim 1 wherein the gelling agent is a cellulosic  
2        polymer.

1        11.    The formulation of claim 1 wherein the gelling agent is hydroxypropyl  
2        cellulose.

1        12.    The formulation of claim 11 wherein the hydroxypropyl cellulose has a  
2        viscosity ranging between 1000 and 2000 centipoise at 25 degrees centigrade.

1        13.    The formulation of claim 12 wherein the concentration of hydroxypropyl  
2        cellulose ranges from 0.5 – 5 total weight percent.

1        14.    The formulation of claim 1 further comprising a dispersing agent.

1        15.    The formulation of claim 1 further comprising an ingredient selected  
2        from the group consisting of: preservative, fragrance, buffer, and an emollient.

- 1      16.    The formulation of claim 1 further comprising a therapeutic agent.
- 1      17.    The formulation of claim 16 wherein the therapeutic agent is selected  
2      from the group consisting of: analgesics, anxiolytic compounds,  
3      antiarrhythmics, antibacterials, antibiotics, anticoagulants, anticonvulsants,  
4      antifungals, antihistamines, anti-inflammatories, antivirals, bronchodilators,  
5      calcium channel blockers, cytotoxics and anticancer agents, cytokines, growth  
6      factors, immunosuppressives, muscle relaxants, psychotherapeutics,  
7      sympathomimetics, vasodilators, vitamins, and combinations of these.
- 1      18.    The formulation of claim 16 wherein the therapeutic agent is an anti-itch  
2      compound.
- 1      19.    A method for reducing pain sensation, the method comprising the steps  
2      of:  
3            applying a therapeutically effective amount of an anhydrous gel  
4      anesthetic formulation according to claim 1 to the area of an individual's skin  
5      to be anesthetized; and  
6            allowing the gel anesthetic to remain in contact with the area for a period  
7      of time sufficient to reduce pain sensation.
- 1      20.    The method of claim 19 further comprising the step of :

2           applying a therapeutically effective amount of an anesthetic formulation  
3           comprising a topical anesthetic compound, a skin penetration enhancer and a  
4           volatile co-solvent, to the area to be anesthetized.

21. A method for reducing pain associated with the application of laser energy to the skin, said method comprising the step of applying a therapeutically effective amount of a topical anesthetic according to claim 1 to the area of the skin to be treated prior to the application of laser energy.

22. A commercial kit comprising at least one topical anesthetic compound  
formulated according to claim 1, together with instructions for use thereof as a  
topical anesthetic.

23. The commercial kit of claim 22 further comprising a second topical  
anesthetic, said second topical anesthetic comprising a skin penetration  
enhancer and a volatile co-solvent.

24. A method of local anesthesia comprising the step of applying to intact skin or oral mucosa the formula of claim 1.